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THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA --- A DEVELOPMENT
OF UNION MOVEMENTS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Missions
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH UNION	1
II. BRIEF HISTORIES OF CONSTITUENT CHURCHES . . .	4
The Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon . .	4
The South India United Church	7
The South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church	17
III. FACTORS LEADING UP TO THE UNION	20
The Thought Trends Regarding Union	20
A Period of Closer Co-Operation	27
Union Endeavors from 1919 to 1930	30
Union Endeavors from 1930 to 1947	36
IV. THE INAUGURATION OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA	46
The Union Service	46
The Doctrinal Basis of the Church of South India	50
Church Government in the Church of South India	54
V. RESULTS OF THE UNION	59
Loss of Fellowship with Churches in India .	59
Loss of Fellowship with Parent Bodies . . .	64
A Revitalized Evangelical Mission Program .	67
Reconstruction of Liturgy	68
VI. EVALUATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA	71
A Critical Evaluation from England, America and India	71
The Basic Unifying Factor	74
The Advantages and Disadvantages of Union in a Mission Area	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH UNION

The second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century have seen an increased emphasis being placed on union among the various evangelical (or Protestant) churches. This union emphasis established itself in that world movement usually called the ecumenical movement. This movement seems to stem from a one-sided emphasis on the doctrine of the Church, the assumption being that if the Church is one organizationally, it will not be long until it becomes one in doctrine. This is worked out practically by mixing all of the teachings and practices of the evangelical churches with the hope of distilling from this mixture the Universal Church. The matter resolves itself more in the direction of super-denominationalism than in the direction of the Church.

The general problems involved in church union can be grouped under the headings of organization, doctrine, and liturgy. All of these factors have to be taken into consideration when two or more bodies engage in negotiations for union. Most attempts at union have tended to overemphasize one or the other of these methods. In Roman Catholicism we find union resting very heavily on organization, in Lutheranism the emphasis is shifted to the side of doctrine, and in the

remaining so-called evangelical bodies the emphasis has been placed on liturgy.

The various groups which make up the Church of South India fall mainly into the group referred to as evangelical churches. It is somewhat amazing to find that the greatest problem of union in the Church of South India was not only liturgical, but also organizational. The various bodies forming this united church followed the congregational, presbyterian, and episcopal forms of church government. One of the purposes of this paper will be to trace the histories of the uniting bodies and to show how a prolonged period of co-operation finally led to an adjustment which allowed these seemingly contradictory forms of church government to assume a new form that attempted to combine elements of all three original forms.

The method of procedure in this paper will be to trace the historical development of the Church of South India, however, with no thought of submitting a complete or comprehensive history of this body. I shall use only those points of history which point to the final consummation of union. For this reason it will be impossible to note all of the various stations and workers, or to give a geographic outline of the churches involved. This would involve the writing of several volumes. People make news, but events make history. For this reason only the main events in the union movement leading toward the formation of the Church of South India

will find mention in this paper.

The proposed contribution of this thesis will be to show that instead of moving toward the universal or ecumenical church, the movement producing the Church of South India actually tended more toward a union on the simple basis of what three church groups happened to hold in common.

The Church of South India, which is the result of the union of the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in India, is a unique phenomenon in the history of the Christian Church. The history of these three churches in India is a story of long and varied experience. The Anglican Church in India has a long history, dating back to the early days of British rule. The Methodist Church in India was founded in 1800, and the Presbyterian Church in India was founded in 1814. The three churches have worked together in various ways, but it was not until 1906 that they formally united to form the Church of South India.

The Church of South India, India and Ceylon

The Church of South India had its genesis from the mission activity of three groups in the Anglican Church in England. These three groups are the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Church Missionary Society.¹

The S.P.C.K. was founded in London in 1599 to minister to Englishmen in other lands and to preach the Gospel to the heathen. This society supported C. F. Schwartz (a Lutheran) from 1793-1794 while he was working in Trichinopoly and Tanjore. In 1804 all the stations begun by the S.P.C.K. were

transferred to the S.P.C.K., S.P.G., and C.M.S.

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORIES OF CONSTITUENT CHURCHES

The three churches which constitute the Church of South India are The Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, The South India United Church, and The South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church. The brief histories of these three bodies are designed to show the large amount of co-operation displayed by these bodies during their status as missions in India.

The Church of India, Burma and Ceylon

This church had its genesis from the mission activity of three groups in the Anglican Church in England. These three groups are the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Church Missionary Society.¹

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¹ Hereafter referred to as the S.P.C.K., S.P.G., and C.M.S.

transferred to the S.P.G.²

The S.P.G. was founded in London in 1701 to care for Englishmen in foreign parts and to win the heathen by the Gospel. It inherited the work of the S.P.C.K. in India in 1824.³ It began regular work in India in 1835.⁴ The S.P.G. began work in Ceylon in 1840 and started work in Burma in 1852.⁵

The evangelical movement started by Charles Simeon of Cambridge was one of the factors which produced the C.M.S. The C.M.S. was organized in 1799. At first it supported C. T. Rhenius, a German Lutheran, because of the lack of trained Anglican missionaries. In 1820 the C.M.S. took over the work started by Schwartz in Tinnevely. It expanded into the Telugu area in 1840.⁶

During the eighteenth century the C.M.S. drew most of its missionaries from the missionary school at Basel. These men were ordained in the Lutheran manner and followed Lutheran customs on the mission field. The same situation held in the S.P.C.K. and the Danish Society. Around 1818 the C.M.S.

²John Aberly, An Outline of Missions (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1945), pp. 50 ff.

³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 83.

⁵Ibid., p. 133.

⁶Ibid., pp. 56 and 82.

began insisting that Anglican forms of service, the Common Prayer Book, be used on the mission field. Still later the C.M.S. agitated for re-ordination of the "Lutherans" and a subsequent request was made that they give up their right of ordaining native clergy in deference to the bishop. This friction soon reduced the co-operation between the Lutheran and the Anglican sending agencies.⁷ By 1836 the Anglicans had a strong enough grasp on the field in south India to change the Lutheran order to Anglican.⁸

Some vital information on the progress of union can be found in the internal affairs of the Anglicans. When Heber followed Middleton as the second bishop in India, the S.P.G. unreservedly handed over the entire direction of its missionary work to the bishop, and contented itself with becoming practically a collecting agency for missionary gifts. However, the C.M.S. wanted to keep control of all phases of its missionary work. In 1836 the C.M.S. was forced to grant Bishop Daniel Wilson the right to make and cancel all missionary appointments. In 1849 the C.M.S. had to fight for its right to sever connections with an unwanted and undesirable missionary. Between 1876 and 1880 a fight raged because Bishop R. S. Copleston tried to put his young chaplains over the aged and evangelical workers of the C.M.S. in the Ceylon Coolie

⁷Julius Richter, A History of Missions in India (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1908), pp. 159 f.

⁸Aberly, op. cit., p. 57.

Mission. Finally the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York gave a decision which recognized the relative independence of the C.M.S. in the exercise of its missionary activities. This entire strife and debate demonstrated the desire of the bishops to obtain an independent interest in work on the mission field. This desire to be an independent group is brought out forcefully in the ultimate union of the Church of South India in 1947. But for the present we must note that in 1901 the C.M.S. thought it the height of arrogance for the Anglican bishops - - at their Calcutta Synod in January - - to demand that the "Church of England" become the "Church of India."⁹ The actual spread of the Anglican communion can be traced by the addition of new dioceses. New dioceses of the Indian church were formed at Madras (1835), Bombay (1837), Lahore (1877), Travancore (1879), Chota Nagpur (1890), Lucknow (1893), Tinnevely (1896), Nagpur (1902), Dornakal (1912), and Assam (1915).¹⁰

The South India United Church

The South India United Church is a collection of missions begun in south India by the Presbyterians, the Free Church of Scotland, the Reformed Church in America, the American

⁹Richter, op. cit., p. 160.

¹⁰The Capuchin Missionary Unit, India and Its Missions (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), p. 188.

Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the London Missionary Society, and the Basel Missionary Society. This group had engaged in various degrees of co-operation during the nineteenth century and finally formed the South India United Church in 1908.

The London Missionary Society¹¹ was founded in 1795 for the purpose of calling the heathen into the fellowship of God's Son. The missions were allowed to adopt such form of church government as to them appeared to be in agreement with the word of God. By 1796 the L.M.S. was sending missionaries to India. The L.M.S. was founded to unite all Paedo-Baptists in Great Britain in the work of missions. It works under an interdenominational charter, but as other denominations formed their own organizations, it became almost entirely dependent on Congregational churches for support. The L.M.S. was active in Calcutta, Travancore, and the Tamil country by 1830 and had a well organized and established mission program.¹² In the beginning the L.M.S. began with a Lutheran trained missionary in the person of William Tobias Ringeltaube. Ringeltaube worked for the L.M.S. from 1806-1816. From this early attempt the L.M.S. mission had grown to eighteen missionaries, 431 native workers, 368 churches, 11,388 church members, and

¹¹Hereafter referred to as L.M.S.

¹²Aberly, op. cit., p. 155.

18,000 children under instruction by 1911.¹³

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions¹⁴ might be considered the American counterpart of the L.M.S. since both organizations are interdenominational as well as congregational in character. The A.B.C.F.M. owes its beginning to New England Congregationalism, but later and for many years it also incorporated into its organization Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and other churches as well as mission societies and individual missionaries.¹⁵ The history of the A.B.C.F.M. begins in 1806 when a revitalized congregationalism evolved after a group with unitarian tendencies split from the main body of Congregationalists. At this time various associations were developed to cope with this problem (unitarianism). The General Association convened at Bradford in 1810. It received a petition for beginning mission work signed by Adoniram Judson, Jr., Samuel Nott, Jr., Samuel J. Mills, and Samuel Newell. This brought about the formation of the A.B.C.F.M. with nine members.

The A.B.C.F.M. in turn set up a Prudential Committee to deal with sending out missionaries and financing them. When

¹³I. H. Hacker, Kerala the Land of Palms (London: London Missionary Society, 1912), p. 117.

¹⁴Hereafter referred to as A.B.C.F.M.

¹⁵Leon Arpee, "An Actual Experiment in Non-Sectarian Missionary Activity," American Journal of Theology, XI (Apr., 1907), 217.

no action was forthcoming by 1811, Judson went to London and entered into negotiations with the L.M.S. and obtained commissions for himself and his three companions. This action so stirred the Board that upon Judson's return they were ready to take over the young men themselves. These men were promptly ordained, but their departure was delayed because of impending war with England. Finally in February, 1812, the Judsons, Newells, Notts, and Messrs. Hall and Rice sailed for India. The men met with a frigid reception in India and had to live almost like fugitives. Judson soon seceded to the Baptists and the other men were soon weakened in health and discouraged. The Madura territory was entered in 1834 and Madras was opened in 1836. The work was beginning to make headway when it was seriously reduced by the business depression of 1837 which caused the closing of 171 free schools.¹⁶

1870 marked the revival of work in the Madura area. Pasumalai Seminary became a training school for ministers and their wives. At this time we note the formation of a Christian Vernacular Education Society and an Evangelical Society among the natives of Ceylon.¹⁷

¹⁶William E. Strong, The Story of the American Board (Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1910), pp. 1-34.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 140 ff.

The conditions on the field made it imperative that the missionaries of all societies stick together. The Christian Alliance was formed at Bombay in 1871 and met again at Allahabad the following year. Twenty societies were represented.¹⁸

The A.B.C.F.M. presents a study in losses and gains. Of the early supporters, "Old School" Presbyterians left in 1837, the Central and Southern Board left in 1839, and the American Missionary Association was formed by another group in 1846. In 1857 the Reformed Church withdrew. In India the A.B.C.F.M. formed a Missionary Union at Bombay with the L.M.S., C.M.S., and Scottish Mission Society. In 1854 the A.B.C.F.M. allied itself with the Turkish Mission Aid Society in England. In 1863 the A.B.C.F.M. received financial aid from the Free Church of Scotland.¹⁹

By 1875 the A.B.C.F.M. was strongly advocating a self-supporting indigenous church. By 1887 the liberal theological principles of the A.B.C.F.M. became so obvious that men of any theological backbone at all were forced to withdraw. At this same time agitation was advanced to have the so-called undenominational A.B.C.F.M. attach itself organically to the churches it served. This general tendency brought about a quicker weaning of the mission churches. After 1885 there is already a distinct trend to turn over the work to

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 140 ff.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 308 ff.

native hands. In India there was formed a National Home Missionary Society about 1900 when the union of missions was receiving strong encouragement at the Ecumenical Conferences in New York (1900), Madras (1902), Shanghai (1907), and Edinburgh (1910). This same ecumenical spirit prevailed in America bringing about the organization of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor (1881), the Student Volunteer Movement (1888), the Young People's Missionary Movement (1902), and the Laymen's Missionary Movement (1906).²⁰

The Basel Mission was originally financed by a grant of 10,000 thalers from Prince Victor of Shönberg. This grant and the ordination of John Christoph Lehner, Christoph Leonhard Greiner, and Samuel Hebach on March 16, 1834, mark the beginning of this mission's work in India. After consultation with the C.M.S. it was decided to begin work on the west coast of India. Upon arrival in India, the three missionaries set up headquarters at Mangalore and commenced work in the Konkani and Canarese languages. Much of their early work was among Europeans and some supply work was done in Anglican churches. The first school was started in 1836, the same year that Dr. H. Mögling came to the field.²¹

The Basel Mission Society carried on a large part of its

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 320 ff.

²¹ George N. Thomssen, Samuel Hebach of India (Mangalore: Basel Mission Book and Tract Depository, 1915), pp. 44 ff.

work through the press. This society was the first to take action against government control in the school system. In 1860 it severed its connection with the government system and organized along its own lines. The result was that the government crushed their schools and by 1867 the missionaries were pleading for a re-union with the government system.²² This group has been accustomed to call itself evangelical rather than Lutheran and so came to be affiliated with the South India United Church rather than the Federation of Lutheran Missions.²³

In the history sketch of the A.B.C.F.M. we noted that the Presbyterians were active supporters of that group almost from its beginning in 1810. However, the Presbyterian communion was going into a period of union at this time and by about 1836 can be considered to have its own mission in India. In 1882 a project by thirteen societies to found a theological seminary at Allahabad failed. In 1901 a congress of delegates met at Allahabad and made some progress toward unification. These attempts at union ran as follows:

In October of the same year (1901) the missionaries of the United Free Church and of the American Reformed Arcot Mission banded themselves together at Vellore under the designation of the United South Indian Church. Terminal negotiations were then carried through in North India: on December 19th, 1904, the Presbyterian Church of India came into existence, and held its first General

²²Richter, op. cit., pp. 283 ff.

²³Aberly, op. cit., pp. 66 ff.

Synod at Allahabad. Thus there is now intimate communion between the native Christians gathered in by eight Presbyterian missionary societies.²⁴

The Church of Scotland Mission specialized in higher education. Madras residents supported similar work in Madras and secured John Anderson as principal of the college in 1837. This has since developed into the Madras Christian College, which under Principal Miller became one of the foremost colleges in India toward the end of the last century.²⁵

After tracing the origins of the various uniting bodies we come to the formation of the South India United Church. The mission supported by the A.B.C.F.M. in 1901 appointed Chandler, Tracy, Herrick, Thirithuvathasan, and Y. J. Taylor as a committee to meet with representatives of the L.M.S. The L.M.S. formed a Joint Committee on Union by appointing four men by the South India District Committee and the Travancore Mission respectively. This combined committee early asked for permission to meet with the standing committee on union of the Presbyterians who in 1901 had organized under the name, "Synod of the South Indian United Church," which

²⁴Richter, op. cit., p. 435. "Note" - The churches entering the Presbyterian union were: The United Free Church of Scotland, the Established Church of Scotland, the English, Irish, Canadian, and American Presbyterians, and the American Reformed Church and the Welsh Calvinists. The American "United Presbyterians," the Scotch "Original Secession," and a few smaller Presbyterian missions did not enter.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 82 f.

was a merger of the Madras United Free Church of Scotland Mission and the American Arcot Mission. Permission was granted and an informal meeting was held at the time of the Madras Decennial Conference in December, 1902. After this the joint committee agreed to cease negotiations with the Presbyterians until they could perfect their union with the larger Presbyterian group in India.

The first general assembly of the proposed United Churches of Southern India was held in Madras in July, 1905. The Ceylon mission of the A.B.C.F.M. joined the group at this time. Dr. Duthie of Nagercoil was chosen president; Mr. J. P. Cotelingen, vice-president. The meeting lasted three days and it was agreed to meet again before 1907.

The type of union proposed is clearly illustrated by a resolution of the executive committee, which states:

The Union, hereby inaugurated, is one whose object is neither to bind down the churches to any denominational organisation, nor to restrict, by the imposition of any creed, the freedom of either church or individual. It is a union which binds together, in the love of Christ and of one another, all who acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour. The individual churches and the local unions of those churches are free to express their ideals of organisation, and their conception of the faith of Christ, under the guidance of the Spirit, which leads into the whole truth. Differences, which may distinguish, do not divide; they are only of value as they minister to that common life which all have received from our common Lord. In our participation in that common life we are united both to Him and to one another. We stand, therefore, not as a union which excludes any of like precious faith, but as a union which invites into its fellowship all who feel that, in the deeper and larger matters of the Christian life, they are one with us in loyalty and

devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶

Meanwhile things were happening in the Presbyterian fold. In 1904 the Presbyterian Church in India was organized with the Synod of the South Indian United Church joining on the condition that it would be free to join the union movements in south India.

Negotiations between the South India Synod and the Madura Church Union were reopened in 1905. In 1906 the Madura Church Union had its second assembly at Madura with Cotelingen as president. Dr. Wyckoff of Vellore and Rev. P. B. Ragiviah of Madras represented the South Indian Synod. The joint committee of the United Churches and the South India Synod proposed a scheme of union which was unanimously adopted. In July, 1908, the scheme was formally inaugurated in Madras and the South India United Church came into being. Wyckoff was elected the first president, Cotelingen vice-president, and Herrick secretary. Under this organization the missions originated by the A.B.C.F.M. changed their three local church unions into the East Church Council and the West Church Council.²⁷

As time went on the other missions in south India had a chance to observe the general functioning of the new South

²⁶John S. Chandler, Seventy-Five Years in the Madura Mission (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1945), pp. 375 f.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 374 ff.

India United Church. Some progress is shown when

. . . in 1919 a notable step was taken by the admission of the churches of the Basel Mission in the Malabar District, which accepted the Basis of Union without alteration. The United Church thus stretches from Calicut to Jaffna, and from Vizagapatam to Cape Comorin. Its churches, organized under eight Church Councils, are found in fourteen Districts of the Madras Presidency, in the States of Travancore and Mysore, and in North Ceylon.²⁸

The South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society is one of the oldest societies working in south India. The work of this society was begun in 1813 at the urging of Dr. Thomas Coke, who with six other missionaries was sent to India in 1813.

It is rather difficult to establish the actual progress of the Methodists because of the wide differences in reports. One report states that between the beginning of work in south India and 1850 there was rapid advance, while another report states that the work was practically at a standstill during this period.

The actual beginning of work may be described thus:

The Wesleyans . . . began their work in the Tamil country in 1818 at Trichinopoly, and from 1821 onwards extended it to Manargudi, Nagapatam, Melecattam, and to the highly situated and healthy city of Bangalore. In this town they commenced their Kanarese Mission in 1835, . . . and in Mysore (1838). In this part of India . . . they thus won for themselves a leading position.²⁹

²⁸ John McKenzie, editor, The Christian Task in India (London: McMillan and Co., Limited, 1929), p. 267.

²⁹ Richter, op. cit., p. 160.

The Methodist mission was carried on mostly through literature and education. (It is easy to see why the Methodists had interest in about 1200 schools by 1950.) The Maharajah of Mysore built one of the schools and helped to pay for the printing press at Mysore. In 1851 the combined pleas of Alexander Duff and of E. J. Hardy of Bangalore had little effect on the missionary secretaries. They said India was a quiet, civilized country. The Mutiny of 1857 changed this type of thinking. By 1860 new forces were being sent to India. At this time the Methodists had only 159 members in the Madras District and 222 in Mysore. Up till this time the schools were mostly for boys, but after 1860 girls' schools were officially opened. After 1880 emphasis was also given to primary education, which had been neglected thus far.³⁰ In 1899 they opened a training college at Guindy, near Madras, for catechists and teachers.³¹

Though the Methodist Church was fragmented to some extent in England, yet it managed to work together with some degree of co-operation on the mission field in India. Beginning in 1797 and continuing till about 1852 the Wesleyan Methodist Church had undergone a splintering effect. These various pieces were brought together in some degree by the uniting of the missionary societies in 1932. This was

³⁰Cyril J. Davey, The March of Methodism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 78 ff.

³¹Richter, op. cit., p. 426.

considered the achievement of Methodist union. The groups in this movement were the Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists, and United Methodists, who in 1932 had 22,000 full members and 123,000 in the Christian community in south India.³²

As has been stated before, this is not intended to be a comprehensive history of any of the various mission churches which later on made up the Church of South India. Rather, these sketches are intended to point out the common origin of many of the mission societies, and to call attention to the loose forms of co-operation which later became closer co-operatives and finally led to union.

³²Davey, op. cit., pp. 84 and 125.

CHAPTER III

FACTORS LEADING UP TO THE UNION

The Thought Trends Regarding Union

In appraising the factors leading up to the union which produced the Church of South India it is well to take into consideration first the thought trends in the world in the last half of the nineteenth century and especially in the first half of the twentieth century. In the period from 1910 onwards the ideas on union become increasingly plentiful. After an examination of the trends towards ecumenicity and the thinking of churchmen on this subject have been explored, the actual negotiations for union will be considered.

Some of the leaders in the ecumenical movement were found in the Anglican Church. Since 1853 the Anglican Church has had various joint committees to study the matter of church unity. In 1886 the House of Bishops issued its "Declaration of Unity." This declaration was incorporated in the Lambeth Conference of 1888, and became known as the Lambeth Quadrilateral. The basic features of the declaration are:

- a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; b) The Apostolic Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith; c) The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution,

and of the elements ordained by Him; d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his church.¹

This particular formulation of the Anglican Church is all important because it became the basic platform for union at the first union conference held at Franquebar in 1919. However, while the Anglican communion was busy drawing up platforms, the Congregationalists were advancing through organizations:

The success of the National Council has led to the gathering of an International Council representative of world wide Congregationalism. Such assemblies have been held in London in 1891, in Boston in 1899, in Edinburgh in 1908, and will meet again in Boston in 1920. They have not yet advanced beyond the stage of meetings for common discussion and fraternal greetings.²

On October 19, 1910, the Episcopal Church at Cincinnati adopted a resolution to set up a committee of seven bishops, seven presbyters, and seven laymen to begin union negotiations with "all Christian communions throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." With this resolution the conferences on Faith and Order had their beginning.³

¹Francis J. Hall, "Union of the Churches," The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, XII, edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson and George William Gilmore (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1950), 69 f.

²Williston Walker, "Recent Tendencies in the Congregational Churches," American Journal of Theology, XXIV (Jan., 1920), 1 ff.

³Hall, "Union of the Churches," p. 70.

The year 1910 was a great landmark in the ecumenical movement. There had been some halting moves made in the direction of world councils and world federations, but with the conference at Edinburgh the movement really got under way.

The first great meeting of the representatives of Protestant bodies for cooperation along interdenominational lines and international lines was the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910. The Conference appointed a Continuation Committee, which in 1920 was succeeded by the International Missionary Council. The Council has held meetings similar to that at Edinburgh: at Jerusalem in 1928, and at Madras in 1938. These meetings have been marked by a steady increase in the delegations from what are now called the "younger churches."⁴

Along the same lines as the International Missionary Council are the World Conference on Faith and Order, which has held meetings at Lausanne in 1927, and at Edinburgh in 1937, and the Universal Christian Council on Life and Work, which has held meetings at Stockholm in 1925, and at Oxford in 1937. All of these organizations are a part of what is called the "ecumenical movement."⁵ Edinburgh appeared to all to be the final break in the rockribbed wall of denominationalism.

In 1914 a voice from India gives a reason for union.

. . . Dr. Palmer, Bishop of Bombay, expresses it with

⁴John K. Shryock, "Missions and Christian Disunion," Anglican Theological Review, XXII (Dec., 1939), 273 ff.

⁵Ibid., p. 283.

some success His thought in a nutshell is that the unity to which we are being called is that of the great universal Church of Christ And the consummation is possible, for "God wills it." But for some time our work should consist of study, conference and prayer - not schematic procedure.⁶

An Anglican writer takes upon himself the task of defining the fields of expression in any proposed union:

Liturgy - The federation movement will tend to modify greatly the worship of the churches that come within it; for it will tend to produce that deeper appreciation of the worth of the individual Christian which issues from the discovery anew that in the exercise of his personal faith in God the Christian finds himself a member of a communion of faith, and that in his personal devotions he is consciously an organ of its expression.

Confessional expression - 1) there is something of greater worth to Christian churches than the doctrinal beliefs they may hold 2) this communion with God in Christ is constituted by participation in the divine purpose to establish a universal human kingdom in which the Spirit of God is regnant, and it is thoroughly moral in character

Institutional or practical expression - The Federal Council places its principal emphasis at this point. Organisation and methods are of great account in this movement. Indeed they are essential to a unity which is more than mystical or sentimental. It is to be noted that the local church is the unit of organisation for the federation.⁷

The liberal views of the Congregationalists are reflected in this comment:

The Congregational Churches undoubtedly favor church unity theoretically. But really effective unity must be a matter of association by mutual concession, by

⁶Francis J. Hall, "The Church and Christian Reunion," Anglican Theological Review, IV (May, 1921), 1 ff.

⁷George Cross, "Federation of the Christian Churches in America, An Evaluation," American Journal of Theology, XXIII (Apr., 1919), 129 ff.

the surrender of certain things which while they are seen not to be vital are yet valued and consecrated by time. It involves a spirit which can estimate as of greater worth the things in which Christians of different names are at one than those in which they are divided.⁸

In the early 1930's a committee with representatives from almost every church and mission society that conducted foreign missions visited the various foreign mission fields. This committee consisted entirely of laymen and was headed by William Hocking. The committee's report of 1932 said in part:

Organic union does not seem to us necessary. It is in many ways an advantage to have in all lands varying shades of thought and interpretation and a different emphasis on significant points of organization and practice if they can be maintained without interfering with unity of spirit and without interrupting cooperative work for common ends. Conformity is by no means desirable. Differences of thought and emphasis should be welcomed. They become tragic only when each one of those who disagree claims to be infallibly right, when each excludes the other from fellowship, or when the disagreements reach the point of engendering hate and bitterness and defeat the possibility of sharing life, ideals, and common purposes.⁹

These people felt that there was too much emphasis on doctrine and not enough on the development of a better social condition. The real strength of Christianity, according to their thinking, lies in its ability to allow a person to attain to completeness and fullness of life. The basic idea

⁸Walker, op. cit., pp. 16 f.

⁹William Ernest Hocking, Re-Thinking Missions (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), p. 93.

is to use those methods and procedures by which life can be brought into its divine possibilities.¹⁰

Dr. John R. Mott, one time chairman of the executive committee of the Student Volunteer Movement and student secretary of the international committee of the Y.M.C.A. (1888), was an influential figure in many of the union endeavors. He gave some recommendations for union at the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, held in June, 1939, at Swathmore. Here is a criticism of his method of union:

. . . that it is admirable in securing consultations and cooperation, and that it promotes the charity and understanding which are a prerequisite for any project of union [is granted]; but the Method prevents the discussion of the most fundamental questions of religion, ignores the development of doctrines, and substitutes secondary for primary interests. In fact, at these meetings, "theological" has become almost a derogatory term. It is more than doubtful whether any organic union can be achieved in such a way . . .¹¹

In a report on the Methodist view of union, the Rev. Wm. T. Harvey takes his argument back to the Wesleys whom he portrays as the founders of a dynamic fellowship. The Methodists are peculiarly qualified to enter into union matters because of this strong emphasis on fellowship. His opinion is summarized thus:

Nothing in my judgment would hasten the consummation

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 94 ff.

¹¹ Shryock, op. cit., p. 288.

of Union as much as fellowship between the members of the several churches at the Table of their Lord.¹²

In 1942 the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the Federal Council of Churches had some recommendations for closer union. These recommendations included stressing the existant reality of inner union, affirming the essential oneness of their churches, acknowledging their essential unity in rites and practices, facilitating intercommunion, participating in the larger ecumenical movement, enlarging the practice of local co-operation, and infusing universal qualities into their more intimate Christian fellowship.¹³

The general tendency to emphasize intercommunion as the touchstone of all union is well expressed in the following article:

Whatever passing expedients may be adopted to reduce the evils of sectarian division, real union is vital to the fulfillment of our Lord's Prayer, and of New Testament teaching - a union that will restore full intercommunion between Christian believers; that will eliminate rivalry between Christian ministries in their internal, religious, and sacramental functions, as well as in those external activities which existing federations seek to harmonize; and that will foster such world-wide harmony of working conditions as is needful for the growth of Christians in one mind and one faith.¹⁴

¹²Wm. T. Harvey, "A Methodist on Church Union," The National Christian Council Review, LXI (Apr., 1941), 191.

¹³"Specific Suggestions for Immediate Forward Steps," The National Christian Council Review, LXII (May, 1942), 213 f.

¹⁴Hall, "Union of the Churches," p. 70.

In closing this section it might be well to include the comment of one of the leading figures in the ecumenical movement. Nathan Soederblom, one time head of the Church of Sweden, after a series of attempts at union with the Church of England, said, "the task of reunion is not to stitch together a patch work quilt, but only to repair a coat which has burst at the seams."¹⁵

After establishing the general thought pattern that prevailed while the Church of South India was in its formative stage, we turn to the actual stages of this development. This material is best considered in three sections: the period of closer co-operation, the union endeavors from 1919 to 1930, and the union endeavors from 1930 to 1947.

The Period of Closer Co-Operation

The period of closer co-operation begins about the middle of the nineteenth century. The missionaries of several missions gathered in 1855, 1857, and 1858 to find areas of co-operation. In 1879 a missionary conference of south India and Ceylon was held.¹⁶ Most of these meetings were directed at avoiding duplication of work in areas where

¹⁵Walter Sillen, "Nathan Soederblom and Christian Unity," Christendom, XII (1947), 312.

¹⁶Kenneth Scott Latourette, "The Great Century," A History of the Expansion of Christianity (Second edition; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), VI, 209.

protestant missions were working.¹⁷

By 1887 some of the fruits of this co-operation became evident in the Madras area. In that year Missionary Miller of the Free Church persuaded the C.M.S. and the Wesleyans to join the Free Church's educational program. This endeavor brought about the formation of the interdenominational Madras Christian College.¹⁸

One explanation of this free co-operation is given by the fact that the native Indian workers were not as aware of the denominational differences as were the missionaries. The other significant explanation is that the missionaries themselves often felt completely free from any control on the part of the sending agencies. Already in the 1840's missionaries supported by Congregational Churches had no scruples about instituting Presbyterian forms of church government.¹⁹

Conferences held at Jubbulpore in 1909 and 1911 produced a plan for a federation of Christian Churches in India. These meetings were greatly influenced by the general tide of ecumenicity throughout the world. The particular agent at work in India was John R. Mott, who, as chairman of the Continuation Committee set up at Edinburgh in 1910, brought

¹⁷Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁹John S. Chandler, Seventy-Five Years in the Madura Mission (Madras: American Madura Mission, c. 1910), p. 114.

his influence to bear on the regional conferences held in India. Mott didn't forget to bring his liberal views with him as he worked for the organization of provincial representative councils which in turn would form a national council.²⁰

The Reformed Church in America considered 1904-1913 as the period when union enterprises with other denominations were being developed. They also considered this as a period when the leadership and control of the India mission was being put more and more into the hands of the Indians.²¹ This development toward union is also reflected in the formation of the National Christian Council in India in 1914.²² The planning for this Council had begun already in 1909. In actuality the formation of this Council did not influence the missions in south India too greatly at this time because the National Missionary Council was formed in this same year. Between 1917 and 1919 the churches in south India continued to negotiate with the north for an All-India Church. This was particularly true of the Presbyterians. However, when negotiations were opened with the Anglican Church in 1919 the scene of interest changed to south India and remained there.²³

²⁰Lataurette, op. cit., p. 210.

²¹Ibid., p. 163.

²²Ibid., p. 210 f.

²³B. Bhaskare, "Church Union in India," The National Christian Council Review, XLV (Feb., 1925), 53 ff.

The Union Endeavors from 1919 to 1930

It is apparent from the foregoing that the spirit of union was in the air, and union institutions and union efforts were being encouraged. Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Christian Endeavor, and similar movements brought people together, and these people learned to see that all were really one in Christ and therefore should also be in one Church. It remained for an Anglican Bishop, the Rt. Rev. V. S. Azariah of Dornakal, to put this general feeling of unity into action. Bishop Azariah and others who were similarly minded presented this matter of union to a group of pastors and leaders who had met for a conference on evangelism at Tranquebar in 1919. All but two members at this conference were Indians. The Anglican Church in India and the South India United Church responded to the request of Bishop Azariah and appointed committees to meet for further consultation.²⁴

The particular proposal brought forward by Bishop Azariah was based on the Lambeth Quadrilateral, which we have mentioned before.²⁵ However, it was necessary to expand on the fourth point of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, namely, the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted. It was explained that

²⁴John J. Bamminga, "Church Union in South India," *Christendom*, XII (1947), 346 ff.

²⁵Supra: p. 20.

the acceptance of the episcopate does not involve the acceptance of any theory of the origin of the episcopacy nor any doctrinal interpretation of it. Also the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate would not call into question the validity of the orders of the uniting churches. It was agreed at Tranquebar that the non-Anglican churches should present candidates for the office of bishop, and that three or more bishops of the Anglican communion would lay their hands on them. As soon as this was accomplished the two bodies would be in intercommunion. Since there would not be enough bishops to celebrate communion in all areas, a special service of commissioning would be held to authorize all ministers of both sides to officiate at the communion. The following added course of action was presented:

. . . Ministers of either body not desiring to officiate at the communion in the other Church would be under no obligation to present themselves, as full liberty would be claimed for individuals on the extreme wing of each body to maintain their present views and practices.²⁶

This first meeting at Tranquebar in 1919 led to twenty-eight years of negotiations. At this meeting the General Assembly of the South India United Church and the Episcopal Synod of the Church of England in India appointed representatives to work on a joint committee. This committee had its first meeting at Bangalore in March, 1920. During this first meeting the committee made it plain that organic union

²⁶ A. E. J. Rawlinson, The Church of South India (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), pp. 23 f.

was desired and issued this statement on the episcopacy:

We believe that the principle of the Historic Episcopate in a constitutional form is that which is more likely than any other to promote and preserve the unity of the Church; therefore we accept it as a basis of union without raising other questions about episcopacy.²⁷

At this same meeting the South India United Church made it clear that after the union its ministers (presbyters) should be recognized without reordination. This in turn raised many questions about the catholicity of the proposed Church of South India in the minds of many Anglicans. However, at this meeting no difficulties were seen by the Anglicans.²⁸

The third meeting of the joint committee was held at Madras in 1921. This gathering worked at the task of drawing up a more detailed statement of agreement. The matters under discussion included such things as government in the future united church, the powers of the bishops, the use of creeds, and the implications of the declaration of assent, confirmation, marriage, intercommunion, and the ministry of the church.²⁹

In 1923 the joint committee held its fourth meeting. This meeting was dedicated for the most part to the formulation of a proposal for the mutual commissioning of ministers. This proposal was aimed at bringing about a unified ministry

²⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁹ Loc. cit.

at the outset in the proposed united church.³⁰

New life was given to the union negotiations when the Wesleyan Methodist Church entered negotiations in 1925 with the other two churches.³¹ This turn of events brought yet another form of church government to be consolidated in the plans for union.

While the United Church of South India was making quite a few demands about the episcopacy, it did not have to be so concerned about maintaining fellowship with its parent bodies. However, the Anglican group was having quite a bit of difficulty in convincing the church authorities in England. This difficulty was pointed out in the general call to prayer issued by the joint committee in 1926:

That all difficulties in the way of union may be removed.

That all Christian people, laymen and ministers, may work for the consummation of union.

That the Missionary Societies and Churches in England may be favourably inclined to support the union of the Churches in India into one Church.³²

However, the agitation on the part of the Anglicans in south India was not restricted to prayer. Already in 1923 it was shown that changes in the church in India, the government in India, the Church of England, the world, and in

³⁰Ibid., p. 28.

³¹Loc. cit.

³²"Prayer for Union," The National Christian Council Review, XLVI (June, 1926), 353 f.

Indian Christian sentiment made it imperative that the rules and regulations of the Church of England no longer should be imposed in India. Specifically these points were noted:

That Church (the Indian Church) must have the fullest liberty to order its own formulae of worship, doctrine, and discipline - only liberty conditioned by the demands of fellowship in the Anglican communion.

It must be autonomous in the sense that it shall have the authority within itself to sub-divide existing dioceses, to create new ones, to appoint and consecrate Bishops, and to issue forms of worship suitable to the needs and the genius of the people with whom it is concerned

The Faith and Order of the Church in India and the Constitution of its organization should be such that it would maintain its communion with the Anglican Church throughout the whole world. The Declaratory Articles of the Constitution are meant to maintain this fellowship, while avoiding the phraseology of the sixteenth century articles.³³

This concerted agitation resulted in the Indian Church Measure of 1927 whereby the Church of England in India became free from control on the part of the Church of England and the State. After 1927 the Anglican communion in India became known as the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon.³⁴ While this turn of events gave a greater freedom to the group negotiating for union in south India, it at the same time made its fellowship with the Church of England questionable. This question of fellowship was an important point because it was the objective of all negotiating churches to maintain

³³"Self-Government for the Church of England in India," The Harvest Field, XLIII (Dec., 1923), 446 ff.

³⁴Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 28.

fellowship and intercommunion with their parent organizations.

The negotiations begun in 1919 produced some significant results by 1929. In this year the Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India was first published.³⁵ This finally gave the members of the joint committee something definite to present to the respective churches. Actual union appeared to be near at hand, but this hope was offset by increased criticism from the home churches and from those ministers and laymen who were not interested in, or who did not favor, this plan for union. The Rev. A. H. Legg, a missionary of the L.M.S. in Travancore, expressed the combined opinion of several ex-Congregationalists. They were particularly afraid of the possible loss of ministers' rights to the bishop. At the same time these men were not too favorably inclined towards the position given to creeds in the plan for union, nor did they feel sure that intercommunion would be as broad after the union went into effect.³⁶

The matter of church union in south India was given much attention at the Lambeth Conference of 1930. The whole position of the conference tended towards a wait-and-see basis. The gist of the findings and recommendations of Lambeth

³⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 28 f.

contained these points:

The united church would not itself be a part of the Anglican Communion; but this fact would not involve anything in the nature of schism, inasmuch as the fact of the formation of the united Church would not deprive any members of the united Church, whether Bishops, Clergy or Laity, of any privilege of communion which they have hitherto enjoyed with the Church of England and with Churches in communion with it. It was observed as a novel feature in the South Indian Scheme that a complete agreement between the uniting Churches on certain points of doctrine and practice was not expected to be reached before the inauguration of the union, the promoters of the Scheme holding that unity would be reached gradually and more securely by the interaction of the different elements in the united Church upon one another. Only, therefore, when the unification resulting from that interaction had become complete would it be possible for a final judgment to be pronounced. The Conference, therefore, without attempting to pronounce such judgment now, expressed to our brethren in India its strong desire that, as soon as the negotiations are successfully completed, the venture should be made and the union inaugurated.³⁷

Union Endeavors from 1930 to 1947

At this point it must be noted that most of the restraining force of the parent churches had been removed from the Indian churches negotiating for union in south India. It was repeatedly stated that these churches wanted to retain fellowship with the parent churches, but as the negotiations progressed the emphasis shifted almost exclusively to fellowship among the south Indian churches. During the period from 1919 to 1930 the churches had contented themselves for the most part to wait for the recommendations of the joint

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 32 f.

committee. However, at the same time there was a group which started appropriating the rights of intercommunion before union had actually taken place.

One of the people that were anxious to appropriate the benefits of union was Mr. R. D. Paul. In 1938 he initiated union services in Madura. The co-operating bodies were the South India United Church, the Anglicans, and the Church of Sweden. The union services used several of the local preachers, but at one service the Lutheran service and Lutheran preacher were used, at the next, Anglican, then South India United Church, etc. Mr. Paul had this to say about the way union should be achieved:

. . . We started wrong by trying to formulate a theological basis of union; that should come last in the process. What we need to promote now is the practice of getting to know each other better, to worship and work together; if we will do that for twenty years we shall find that our abstract theological speculations will resolve themselves into a practical and working basis of union.³⁸

About this same time Bishop Azariah held forth on the theme that the Mission Societies were trying to barter self-government to the Indian church in exchange for self-support. He is very definite in saying that this is entirely too materialistic on the part of the parent churches and fails to develop a proper spiritual motive for stewardship on the part of the Indian church. To this he adds that it is

³⁸ A. J. Saunders, "A New Approach to Church Union," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (Dec., 1939), 641 ff.

positively wrong to say that the Indian church's duty is to attain to self-support, and the Mission's duty to evangelize. A church can live without self-support; it will die without witness bearing.³⁹

This position taken by Bishop Azariah seems to advocate continued co-operation between the Mission and the Indian church. However, he is really facing the hard facts of India's extreme poverty, it being a matter of record that the average total family income of Indian Christians at this time amounted to only about twenty dollars a year. Even at that it would be possible for a number of congregations to band themselves together to support one pastor. However, this kind of arrangement would seriously affect the amount of pastoral care given in any particular locality. This would cause difficulty particularly in the regular celebration of Holy Communion.⁴⁰

These were trying years for the protagonists of church union since the actual process of forming the union seemed to be at a standstill. The Tambaram Conference of 1939 gave the needed boost to get things under way again. A total of 471 delegates met at Tambaram for the International Missionary Conference. It was remarkable that delegates from Japan, China, and Germany were present even though the tense world situation seemed to preclude their presence. The

³⁹V. S. Azariah, "Self-Support," The National Christian Council Review, LVIII (Oct., 1938), 536 ff.

⁴⁰Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 44.

conference held joint communion services, on one Sunday according to the Free Church rite and on the next according to the Anglican rite.⁴¹ However, the real force of this conference is found in these recommendations:

1. That studies be undertaken with a view to securing co-operation in church discipline
2. That the organization of co-operative institutions be reviewed in the light of the principle that the indigenous church should have an influential share in the control and direction of policy
3. That a deliberate and sustained effort be made by the International Missionary Conference and the National Christian Councils to win the active co-operation of Christian groups that are at present outside our fellowship.
4. That the National Christian Councils be urged to initiate co-operative planning for the whole Christian enterprise in their respective fields and that mission boards and churches on the field should consult with the National Christian Council in such matters.
5. That there exists the supreme urgency of the call for organic union on the part of the younger churches, the older churches take this to heart⁴²

The seventeenth General Assembly of the South India United Church, meeting at the American College, Madura, September 19-22, 1939, had eighty accredited delegates present. The Rev. J. J. Banninga of the committee on church union presented the following resolutions which were adopted and were to be presented to the joint committee on union:

- a) . . . Every diocese should be represented in Synod by not fewer than two presbyters and four laymen, with one additional presbyter and two additional lay

⁴¹"Tambaram Reflections," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (Feb., 1939), 57 ff.

⁴²"Co-Operation and Unity," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (May, 1939), 233 f.

representatives for every complete 10,000 baptized members . . . to a maximum of six presbyters and twelve laymen.

b) The General Assembly is against voting by houses . . . and asks that all final decisions in the Synod be made by that body voting as a unit.

c) . . . three presbyters instead of two should participate in the consecration of Bishops

d) . . . The General Assembly urges the Joint Committee to take steps to secure the adoption of the three churches concerned of the practice of intercommunion and inter-celebration between them before union, thus removing one of the chief obstacles to union.

e) . . . steps be taken . . . by which the churches may grow together in worship and service.⁴³

At this same meeting in 1939 the South India United Church wanted a few other changes in the Scheme for Union.

1) It wanted a provision included whereby a diocesan council would be enabled to approve a layman to administer the Lord's Supper in "certain out of the way places." 2) According to its General Assembly (1937) recommendation, the South India United Church wanted a more liberal attitude toward creeds because "a multitude of people today cannot possibly accept the literal wording of the ancient creeds as though they were the inspired authority with reference to our Faith." 3) It agreed with the findings of ten Congregationalists and ten Anglicans in Chicago that the union must include a merger of the "collective principle" (Anglican) and the "individual principle" (Congregational).⁴⁴

⁴³"The South India United Church General Assembly and the Scheme of Union," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (Nov., 1939), 618 ff.

⁴⁴J. J. Banninga, "Church Union From the Standpoint of the South India United Church," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (July, 1939), 346 ff.

It is interesting to note the disposition of the eight councils of the South India United Church at the 1939 meeting. The Jaffna Council had little comment on the Scheme for Union since it would simply be transferred to the Madras and Ramnad Bishopric of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon. The Travancore Council also was concerned only with the Anglican group and would retain the same area. The Madura Council was waiting for union with the Methodists and Anglicans since it was situated in their midst. The North Tamil Council (Salem and Coimbatore) wanted modification in the Scheme for Union. The Madras Council agreed with the general tone of the Scheme, but wanted some modification. The Telugu Council had daily contact with the Anglicans and pressed for an assurance of equal rights. The Kanarese Church Council was already in fellowship with the Methodists. The Malabar Church Council (a branch of the Basel Mission) was anxious to enter the union. Even this general agreement did not remove the great difficulty which changed the erstwhile consultative function of the General Assembly into a governing and authoritative Synod in the proposed Church of South India. The present slowness in arriving at a final decision on the question of union is explained by the fact that the General Assembly had no authority to act except as that was granted by the individual councils.⁴⁵

⁴⁵A. Sumitra, "South India United Church and Church Union," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (Oct., 1939), 513 f.

In a letter in his Diocesan Magazine Bishop Azariah appraises this as a crucial moment in the adoption of the Scheme for Union. In the course of the letter he questions the propriety of intercommunion before union, while mentioning that intercommunion is practiced at joint committee meetings and union conferences. He also expressed the opinion that the proposed Synod of the Church of South India should be a consultative, rather than a governing, body. Finally, he sees nothing wrong with the South India United Church's request for a broad interpretation of the creeds, while at the same time stating: "The creeds properly understood and historically interpreted constitute one of the greatest bulwarks of the evangelical faith of Christendom."⁴⁶

The 1939 meeting of the joint committee was draped with crepe by all of its critics. However, some real advances were made. Many of the South India United Church's resolutions were incorporated in the Scheme, specifically those dealing with the episcopacy, the consecration of bishops (with one exception), and lay representation in Synod. On the question of intercommunion little new was given in the way of encouragement. However, it was reaffirmed that the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference (1920) and the Episcopal Synod (1932) allowed bishops of the Anglican communion

⁴⁶v. S. Azariah, "South India Union, An Appeal," The National Christian Council Review, LIX (Sept., 1939), 495 ff.

to admit baptized but unconfirmed communicants of the non-episcopal congregations to communion while direct negotiations for union were under way.⁴⁷

The seventeenth joint committee outlined its duties as being to prepare an acceptable scheme of union and to arrange for retreats and conferences where representatives of the uniting churches could come together to understand each other and pray for union. It reported that the South India United Church had accepted the special committee report restricting the celebration of communion to ordained persons. Intercommunion was again discouraged, but assurance was given that this matter would be expedited immediately after union. The joint committee refused the request of the South India United Church for three presbyters at the ordination of all bishops since this would infringe on the liberty of those dioceses where only three bishops officiated. The simplified statement of the Scheme for Union was referred to the continuation committee. By 1942 the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church adopted a resolution approving the Scheme for Union. The joint committee adopted a resolution urging all negotiating churches to consider the scheme with a view to uniting by the Spring of 1944. In addition a tentative scheme for sixteen, rather than ten, dioceses was adopted at

⁴⁷J. S. M. Hooper, "Church Union in South India: The Present Position," The National Christian Council Review, LX (February, 1940), 72 ff.

the urging of the South India United Church.⁴⁸

The South India United Church met at Gooty September 19-22, 1944. About one hundred delegates were present. Bishop Azariah of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon was present to explain the views of his church. The vote on union was as follows (by councils): four for it; two for it with some changes; and two against it. It was agreed to have a waiting period of two years before a final vote was taken. H. Sumitra succeeded G. H. Marsden as president of the General Assembly.⁴⁹

We have already noted that the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church had accepted the Scheme for Union in 1942. This group was the last to enter the negotiations and the first to accept the Scheme for Union, which is about its only mark of distinction. However, the time was ripe to accept the Scheme. The General Council of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon, meeting at Nagpur, adopted the following resolution:

That this Council, while reaffirming that the Church of this Province continues to be bound in matters of Faith and Order by the Constitution, Canons and Rules of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon, finally adopts the Scheme of Church Union in South India (Seventh Edition revised), Parts I and II, in order to permit the dioceses of Madras, Travancore and Cochin, Tinnevely, and Dornakal to carry out their practically unanimous desire

⁴⁸H. Sumitra, "Church Union in South India," The National Christian Council Review, LXII (January, 1942), 30 ff.

⁴⁹H. Sumitra, "The General Assembly of the South India United Church," The National Christian Council Review, LXIV (November, 1944), 266 ff.

to enter into union with the Methodist and South India United Churches.⁵⁰

At the twentieth meeting of the General Assembly of the South India United Church, held at Tambaram in September, 1946, action was taken on church union. The various councils of the South India United Church voted in favor of union with the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon and the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church by an eighty-six per cent majority.⁵¹

A fitting summary of these twenty-eight years of negotiations is given by Banninga in these words:

It was found that among the Indian Christians there was not that cleavage in faith and practice that had arisen in the West, for denominational connections in India were largely due to the place where one was born, where a particular Church was at work. As the Bishop of Dornakal used to say, "I am an Anglican because of geography rather than because of conviction." It was easier therefore to overlook the differences that had divided Western Christianity.⁵²

⁵⁰"Church Union in South India," The National Christian Council Review, LXV (March, 1945), 35.

⁵¹M. P. E. Aruliah, "The Twentieth General Assembly of the South India United Church," The National Christian Council Review, LXVI (December, 1946), 359 f.

⁵²Banninga, "Church Union in South India," p. 347.

CHAPTER IV

INAUGURATION OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

The Union Service

The long years of negotiations for union were finally climaxed by the formal act of union at St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Madras on September 27, 1947. The presiding bishop was the Rt. Rev. Chirakarottu Korula Jacob, an Anglican bishop of central Travancore. A very large group of people, including six hundred representatives of the churches, missionary societies, and Christian associations from all parts of the world, were present at this inaugural service.

The call to worship was made by the presiding bishop. This was followed by a hymn, prayer, and Scripture reading from John 17. Then a representative of each of the uniting churches in turn read the resolution of his church accepting the Scheme for Union and placed on the communion table a signed copy of the basis of union and constitution and a list of all ministers in his church, which was a complete list, since precaution had been taken to obtain the written consent of the ministers before the service.

The declaration of the act of union was then made by the presiding bishop in these words:

Dearly beloved brethren: In obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, who on the night of his passion prayed that his disciples might be one, and by

authority of the governing bodies of the uniting churches, whose resolutions have been read in your hearing and laid in prayer before Almighty God, I do hereby declare that those three churches, namely, the Madras, Travancore and Cochin, Tinnevely and Dornakal dioceses of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon; the Madras, Madura, Malabar, Jaffna (Ceylon), Kannada, Telugu and Travancore church councils of the South India United Church; and the Methodist Church in South India, comprising the Madras, Trichinopoly, Hyderabad and Mysore districts; are become one Church of South India.¹

This act of union brought into being a church with a total membership of 1,017,183 made up of 499,966 Anglicans; 224,655 Methodists; and 292,562 from the South India United Church.² This was not a total union since one council of the South India United Church failed to join as well as about 32,000 Anglicans in the Telugu country and Trivandrum.³

To avoid confusion it must also be remembered that not all evangelical (Protestant) churches entered this union. Outside of the Church of South India there were about 500,000 evangelicals in south India composed of 100,000 Baptists; 200,000 Mar Thoma Syrian Church members; and 200,000 Lutherans. Besides this there was also a smaller group of Methodists from an American Methodist Mission which did not join.⁴

¹"Churches United in South India," The Christian Century, LXIV (October 22, 1947), 1263 ff.

²Based on 1941 statistics.

³"Inaugurate New Church in India," The Christian Century, LXIV (October 29, 1947), 1294 f.

⁴John Theodore Miller, "The Church of South India," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVIII (December, 1947), 943.

After the act of union had been read the bishops were recognized by the presbyters and the presbyters were recognized by the bishops as constituting proper orders. Prior to the inauguration service the church councils and synods had made nominations for bishops and the actual selection had been made by a small committee of selectors from all three churches. Of the fourteen bishops selected seven were European and none was Tamilian. This was a source of keen disappointment and there was some criticism.⁵

The consecration of the new bishops was performed by the laying on of hands by three Anglican bishops and three presbyters from each of the other two uniting churches. The following fourteen bishops were consecrated: In south Travancore, the Rev. A. H. Legg, an L.M.S. missionary; in central Travancore, the incumbent, Anglican Bishop C. K. Jacob of the Syrian Christian community; in Malabar and Cochin, Archdeacon Geoffrey Stewart Smith, who was nominated by both Anglicans and the South India United Church; in Madura and Ramnad, the Rev. Leslie Hewbigin, a missionary from the Church of Scotland; in Tinnevely, the incumbent, Anglican Bishop George Selwyn; in Jaffna, the Rev. S. Kulendran, a distinguished graduate of Serampore; in Trichinopoly, the Rev. E. Thorpe, a Methodist missionary; in Madras, the

⁵ Carol Graham, "Church Union - I. In South India," The National Christian Council Review, LXVII (September, 1947), 416 ff.

incumbent, Anglican Bishop A. M. Hollis; in Mysore, the Rev. P. Gurushanta, a Methodist minister; in Cuddapah and Chittoor, the Rev. H. Sumitra, who was at the original meeting in Tranquebar and was on the staff of Union Theological College in Bangalore; in Anantapur and Kurnool, the Rev. Canon Bunyan Joseph, a Telugu pastor; in Kistna, the incumbent, Assistant Bishop of Dornakal, the Rt. Rev. Y. Muthyalu, a Telugu; in Dornakal, the incumbent, Anglican Bishop Anthony Elliott; in Medak, the Rev. Frank Whittaker of the Methodist Church.⁶

The first communion service of the Church of South India was held in connection with this inaugural service. The order of service was according to Anglican practice.⁷

A new church had been launched. For the Indians this meant that they finally had a church which could in some measure be called their own. For the European missionaries this meant that they had more or less burned their bridges behind them and they would have their future almost exclusively with the Church of South India. The Church of England virtually severed fellowship relations with the new church. This break is expressed in part by these comments:

No censure attaches to any member of the Church of

⁶John J. Banninga, "Church Union in South India," Christendom, XII (1947), 355.

⁷"Churches Unite in South India," The Christian Century, LXIV (October 22, 1947), 1263 f.

England ordained or unordained who joins the South India Church or works in it.

When a former Anglican, now a member of the South India Church, visits this country, we are ready to welcome him to full communion and ministry with us. That is what the Archbishops' reply means in saying "there would be such intercommunion between clergy and laity of the South India Church and those of this Province," as is stated here.

When a former Anglican of the South India Church or an Anglican who has worked in it returns to this country for good, he would receive back his full Anglican status

Members of the South India Church not episcopally ordained or confirmed will, when in this country, be subject to the same regulations that apply to members of non-episcopal communions here.⁸

The Doctrinal Basis of the Church of South India

The doctrinal position of the Church of South India is rather hard to define. The only big questions regarding doctrine during the negotiations concerned themselves mainly with the ministry and intercommunion. However, even on these two points there was little discussion on the Scriptural basis of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper or the Ministry, but rather a discussion about their practical application. This can be partly explained by the fact that most of the people involved styled themselves as evangelicals rather than confessionalists.

The only documents available on the doctrinal position of the Church of South India are the "Basis of Union" and the

⁸Geoffrey Francis Fisher, "The South India Church: An Open Letter," The Living Church (September 28, 1947), p. 13 ff.

"Constitution of the Church of South India" contained in the Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India. There is no detailed body of doctrine mainly because the union was not consummated on a confessional basis.

The Church of South India accepts the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

as containing all things necessary for salvation and as the supreme and decisive standard of faith; and acknowledges that the Church must always be ready to correct and reform itself in accordance with the teaching of those Scriptures as the Holy Spirit shall reveal it.⁹

The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are accepted as witnessing to and safeguarding the faith of the Church. It is also acknowledged that this faith is continuously confirmed by the Holy Spirit in the experience of the Church of Christ.

Thus they believe in God, the Father, the Creator of all things, by whose love we are preserved;

They believe in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God and Redeemer of the world, in whom alone we are saved by grace, being justified from our sins by faith in Him;

They believe in the Holy Spirit, by whom we are sanctified and built up in Christ and in the fellowship of His Body;

And in this faith they worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.¹⁰

This appears as the full doctrinal statement covering almost everything from the doctrine of God to eschatology.

⁹Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India (Seventh edition; Madras: Christian Literature Society for India, 1947), p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4 f.

Some additional statements are connected with the position on creeds. One of these affirms in part:

The Church of South India is competent to issue supplementary statements concerning the faith for the guidance of its teachers and the edification of the faithful, provided that such statements are not contrary to the truths of our religion revealed in the Holy Scriptures.¹¹

In this manner the Church of South India disregards the confessional development of almost twenty centuries of Christianity and exposes itself to all of the heresy latent in the entire world. Even the creeds themselves are put in a precarious position by this statement:

The uniting Churches accept the fundamental truths embodied in the Creeds named above as providing sufficient basis of union; but do not intend thereby to demand the assent of individuals to every word and phrase in them, or to exclude reasonable liberty of interpretation, or to assert that those Creeds are a complete expression of the Christian faith.¹²

This last statement was included to pacify the people from the Free Churches. It is designed to lead men back to the Bible as the basis of all doctrine, but it gives no assurance that there will be any uniformity or agreement in the interpretation of Scripture.

Baptism is accepted as one of the two sacraments instituted by Christ Himself. A very simple form of Baptism is recommended, using these words: "N., I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹³

¹¹Ibid., p. 27.

¹²Ibid., p. 5.

¹³Ibid., p. 72.

The Lord's Supper is treated without going into detail concerning the elements. It is merely stated that the elements used at the institution shall continue to be used. Since the question of communion celebration was a matter of much discussion during the union negotiations, some statement had to be made about the celebrant. It is stated that in every communion the true Celebrant is Christ alone. However, God is a God of order and so it is only proper that the duly ordained clergy should celebrate the Lord's Supper. "In the united Church the Sacraments will be observed with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him."¹⁴

An elaborate statement was drawn up to assure full privileges of intercommunion to all members in the Church of South India. At the same time it was stated that all clergy from the three separate churches would have the same and equal rights in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Everyone was assured full privileges of intercommunion with all churches which would be in fellowship with the Church of South India.¹⁵

The universal priesthood of all believers is acknowledged in the Church of South India. The clearest statement to this

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

effect is found in connection with the article on membership in the church.¹⁶

The doctrine of the ministry is defined in rather broad terms since it had to incorporate the categories of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. The sum and substance of this teaching is found in the section dealing with Pastorates. A partial explanation of their position is given in these words:

The Church of South India desires that all its members should constantly bear in mind that their different forms of ministry, both to those within the Church and to those outside it, are only of value for the carrying out of God's purposes in so far as the Divine Spirit is working through those ministries on the hearts of men¹⁷

Church Government in the Church of South India

The government of the Church of South India follows a general episcopal pattern. Certain modifications had to be incorporated into this episcopal form to grant more rights to the congregations. The general outline of the structure of the Church of South India's government includes three major categories. First there are the pastorates, pastorate committees, and congregations; then there are the diocesan councils; and finally there is the synod. In the entire framework of this government the idea of the Historic

¹⁶Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 59.

Episcopate is given priority.

The congregations form the basic unit of church government in the Church of South India. However, it would hardly be correct to say that these congregations have a representative voice in this government. To have official status in the Church of South India the congregation must be recognized by the diocesan council. The diocesan council is empowered to lay down rules regulating the qualifications necessary for lay membership on the pastorate committees. Again, the diocesan council regulates the degree and extent of oversight exercised by the local pastor. The congregations may form circuits or districts only with the consent of the diocesan council.¹⁸ It is obvious that the Congregational concept of the congregation is retained in name only, while its former powers are delegated to the diocesan council.

The diocesan council is the working unit of church government. It is composed of the bishop of the diocese, the assistant bishop, all presbyters in the diocese whether active in congregations or other offices, and lay representatives to consist of not less than the number of presbyters in the diocese and not to exceed twice their number. Each diocesan council has the right to set up its own constitution. The bishop of the diocese is the head of the diocesan council. Each diocese will have a direct voice in its government and

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 59 ff.

will have particular rights in regulating the appointment of its bishop as well as in the acceptance of candidates for ordination to the ministry. Besides this the diocesan council functions as the co-ordinating body for the work of missions, evangelism, and administration.

The diocesan council has final authority regarding financial matters in its own diocese. It is enabled to bring matters to the attention of synod, but it is subordinated to an advisory capacity in matters where synod is involved. The bishop of the diocese will have sole authority in matters concerning:

- a) the faith and doctrine of the Church,
- b) the conditions of membership in the Church, and the rules which govern excommunication from the Church,
- c) the functions of the ordained ministers of the Church, or
- d) the worship of the Church, and any forms of worship proposed for general use in the Church.¹⁹

If the diocesan council does not agree with any decision of the bishop, it will have to bring the matter to synod for settlement. The diocesan council is further obligated not to take any action contrary to the constitution of the Church of South India. Any valid change in matters of diocesan constitutions will have to be made by a two-thirds majority vote.²⁰

The synod of the Church of South India is given very broad powers in the constitution. The greater authority of

¹⁹Ibid., p. 63.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 61 ff.

bishops over presbyters and laymen is unmistakably indicated in every phase of the synod's activity. This is already evident in the membership of synod. Every bishop of the church is a member of the synod, whereas the presbyters and lay representatives are elected for only one year terms.²¹

The officers of synod consist of moderator, a deputy moderator, a general secretary, and a treasurer. These officers are elected by ballot with the first two offices being open only to bishops. The officers of synod hold office from one meeting of synod to the next, and are eligible for re-election.²²

The powers of synod require special attention. Here the organizational force of the Church of South India is brought to the fore.

The Synod is the supreme governing and legislative body of the Church of South India, and the final authority in all matters pertaining to the Church.

It has power to make rules and pass resolutions and take executive action as may be necessary from time to time for the general management and good government of the Church and of the property and affairs thereof.

The Synod shall deal with matters of common interest to the whole Church of South India, and with those which affect the relation of the dioceses to one another and to the rest of the universal Church, and shall leave the Diocesan Councils to deal with the internal affairs of each diocese.

The Synod has, in particular, power to determine the number and boundaries of the dioceses and to form new dioceses in the Church. It has also power to determine whether anything in the Constitution of any Diocesan

²¹Ibid., p. 64.

²²Ibid., p. 65.

Council is at variance with anything contained in this Constitution, and, if it find such variance, to rule that such part of such Diocesan Constitution is of no force.

The Synod has power to add to or otherwise alter the Constitution of the Church of South India in the manner laid down in Chapter XIV of this Constitution.

It has final authority in all questions of the interpretation of the Constitution and other official documents of the Church of South India.²³

There is no delegation of authority from the bottom up in the government of the Church of South India. Authority is vested primarily in the bishops and is conditioned only to the extent that the bishops themselves allow. The only possibility of congregational representation is found when all the presbyters and all the lay delegates vote as a group to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 66.

²⁴Ibid., p. 68 f.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF THE UNION

The leaders in the newly formed Church of South India generally regarded themselves as having put into practice what the rest of the churches has put into theory. The mere fact that the churches in south India united is in many ways a unique experiment since it attempted to reach union without insisting on uniformity. This de-emphasis on uniformity led to a real problem of continued fellowship with the rest of the churches in south India, particularly with the Anglican communion. In this chapter the new problem of fellowship will be considered as well as the attempts of the Church of South India during its first six years to establish more uniformity within its own union.

Loss of Fellowship with Churches in India

The only real problem of fellowship centered around the Anglican communion in India and England. For convenience we will consider the problems of fellowship in India first. The Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon heard some sharp criticism on continued communion with the Church of South India for two reasons, one technical, and the other doctrinal. These two reasons are aptly summed up in this manner:

The technical reason is that communion of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon with the new Church of South

India will be contrary to the rules laid down in the constitution of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon .

...
The more serious difficulty is the doctrinal one. There is a strong section amongst us who gravely fear that the Anglican ministry and traditions regarding worship and sacraments will be sacrificed in the new Church of South India¹

Though this posed a serious threat to fellowship, the act of union did not completely disrupt relations between the Church of South India and the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon. By 1950 some progress had been made in the direction of mutual recognition of the clergy. "Official recognition of the validity of ordination of bishops and clergy in the Church of South India was given by the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon (Anglican) which met in New Delhi, India."² This particular stand was re-defined later on in 1953 and a considerably narrower conception of fellowship set forth. The South India Churchman reported this relation as follows:

Bishops and Presbyters of the Church of South India consecrated or episcopally ordained before, at or after the Inauguration of the Church of South India, may be permitted, with the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese to celebrate the Holy Communion in the Churches of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon.³

¹J. K. Shah, "Question of Communion with the Church of South India," The National Christian Council Review, LXVIII (June-July, 1948), 249.

²"Recognize Ordinations," Augustana Lutheran (February 1, 1950), p. 4.

³"CIPBC and CSI: CIPBC Action," The South India Churchman (February, 1953), p. 4.

Some real problems developed with the Congregationalists who refused to come into the union. This group was orientated more to finances than to mission work. The actual court action is reported in this editorial comment:

A dissident group calling itself the "Continuing Congregationalists" took the question of the jurisdiction of the South India Church to court. It maintained that the Church of South India is "a new church, with a new set of doctrines and hierarchy, and therefore cannot claim to be the successor to Congregational churches established in India by the London Mission." The court held that the dozen congregations that stood out, although a total of around 400 Congregational groups had gone into the union, are the "true London Mission Christians" and should be permitted to carry on without hindrance.⁴

Thus the court order established that the dozen or so congregations which held back from joining the union are actually, or at least legally, continuing the London Mission even though some 400 congregations joined. This bit of court action is nothing new since many of the missions in India and especially some of the congregations are seemingly continually engaged in some kind of litigation. In actual fact the Church of South India enjoyed a comparatively small amount of litigation after the union.

The Baptists in South India had been viewing the formation of the Church of South India with much interest. That the Baptists had no real intention of joining the Church of South India is illustrated by an open letter written by a

⁴"Sectarians Win a Victory in India," The Christian Century, LXIX (August 12, 1953), 909.

Baptist missionary in which he writes in part:

Because of my deep interest in the union ventures and my hope that someday we Baptists may join it, it is with great concern that I am hearing reports and seeing evidences that the trend is very definitely toward Anglicanism. If the Church of South India becomes simply the Anglican Church in South India, it will be a betrayal of the basis of union, it will mean that denominations not yet within the union Church will never join it, and most probably will mean that there will be split-offs of groups whose heritage is radically non-Anglican⁵

This view is exactly the opposite of that given by Bishop Newbigin who intimates in his book, The Reunion of the Church, that Anglicanism has been submerged into Presbyterianism.

The whole matter boils down to which side of the fence a person is on. The Baptists eventually turned their thoughts to union among themselves. This brought about a cessation of any present hopes that this group would join the Church of South India.

The churches involved in the Federation of Lutheran Churches had a few "conversations" with the Church of South India. A specific resolution was drawn up and came into print in the following report:

. . . The conversations with the Church of South India were considered most valuable, and it was RESOLVED to recommend to the churches that these conversations be continued. It was felt that if the C.S.I. would follow its principle of comprehensiveness in regard to Church Union, and agree to a wider union, the adoption of the simple exposition of the Gospel given by Luther

⁵H. C. Jackson, "An Open Letter to the Bishops of the Church of South India," The Gospel Witness, XLIV (October, 1948), 45.

in his Small Catechism could give the Lutherans the guarantee that the Gospel in its purity and entirety could be disseminated through this simple book of instruction To the Lutherans, unity in faith is the essential thing, and so far as order is concerned, the good work already effected by the C.S.I. in regard to order would be acceptable in regard to a more comprehensive union with the Lutherans The true name for the Church is the Church of the Apostolic faith, and the whole approach to the question of Church Union was on the basis of this fundamental unity of all believers that does exist even in divided Christendom⁶

This might have meant a great deal of encouragement to the Church of South India at the time it was written. The Lutheran Church had just been graced by a visit by Bishop Nygren and were in a rather expansive mood. A year later (1951) the Lutherans had their attention diverted by a proposal to set up a Lutheran Theological College and there were some ideas about establishing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in India. This plan quickly took precedence in the minds of the Lutherans, although some tried to maintain that both ideas could be considered at the same time.⁷ This would be quite an accomplishment since it would involve the antithesis of denominationalism as over against the formation of something closer to a universal church. In the last analysis the Church of South India was left out of further negotiations.

⁶J. D. Asirvadam, "The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church and Church Union," The Gospel Witness, XLV (March, 1950), 76 f.

⁷"The Church of South India," The Gospel Witness, XLVII (February, 1951), 160.

Loss of Fellowship with Parent Bodies

The position of the Church of England is a bit hard to reduce to rational principles. The Anglicans refused to go into fellowship with the Church of South India. This is rather strange when it is remembered that the Church of England is in full communion with the Church of Sweden, which in turn is in full communion with other Lutheran, non-episcopal churches. The Church of England also originally used non-episcopally ordained Lutherans in its mission work in India.

In 1950 the Church of South India submitted a resolution to the Convocation of Canterbury and York. This resolution contained these proposed points of agreement:

- (1) Bishops, presbyters and deacons of the Church of South India may be invited to preach in Anglican churches on suitable occasions, at the discretion of the bishops;
- (2) Former Anglican clergy, when on furlough or when returning for permanent work, may if they desire resume full status as ministers of the Church of England, being subject to Church of England regulations;
- (3) Former Anglican communicants may receive Holy Communion in the Church of England;
- (4) Other communicants of the Church of South India when in England may be welcomed to Holy Communion as visitors from a Christian communion overseas, at the discretion of the bishop;
- (5) Anglican clergy and lay persons going out to South India may accept the hospitality of that Church for the performance of priestly functions or the receiving of Holy Communion.⁸

This in essence formed the agreement between the Church

⁸"The Church of South India Joint Committee Report to the Convocation of Canterbury and York," The National Christian Council Review, LXX (August, 1950), 333.

of England and the Church of South India. It is significant to note that no agreement was reached on the proposal that other episcopally ordained presbyters and deacons should be permitted to celebrate Holy Communion in Anglican churches. The question had been discussed and the Church of England would agree to this proposal only on the condition that such men limit their ministrations to the Church of England and that they not use their freedom to fellowship with the non-episcopal churches.⁹ The basic features of this agreement were accepted by the Church of Ireland in 1952.¹⁰

The question of fellowship did not disrupt the support given to the Church of South India on the part of the various mission societies and churches. The Church of South India had been established only after it was assured of this continued support. The general dissatisfaction with the hindrances this involved is brought out in an editorial comment in the official paper of the Church of South India with these words:

The Church Union Movement is partly the cause and partly the result of the Ecumenical Movement. It is affected both by theological and by non-theological factors, the most non-theological factor being the Almighty Dollar - or the Omnipotent Pound Even Comity is not enough; it has served its day. Now Church Union is essential, but is not enough, because sometimes it may easily result, not in a Church Union, as such, but in

⁹Ibid., pp. 334 f.

¹⁰"Church of Ireland and C.S.I.," The South India Churchman (August, 1952), p. 14.

a superdenomination. The Church of South India - a step in the right direction - is nevertheless, not what such a united South India should be ideally, but rather what missionaries and those brought up by them, think it ought to be.¹¹

No matter how much the Church of South India might dislike the directives connected with the support given by churches and mission societies, it has no intention of giving up or doing without this support for the time being. On February 12, 1953, the Church of South India Council in Great Britain was established. Previous to this a committee had been functioning to co-ordinate the work of the missionary societies which supported the Church of South India. The chairman of the newly formed council is Rev. J. S. M. Hooper, who was the former treasurer of the Church of South India. The churches represented in this council are: Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, and the Church of Scotland. Missionary Societies represented include: C.M.S.; C.E.Z.M.S.; C.S.F.M.C.; L.M.S.; M.M.S.; and C.M.G. There are thirty-eight people attached to this council. Most of them are full time pastors in England so the work is left mainly to the chairman and several secretaries.¹² This continued support from the parent bodies makes the Church of South India something less than indigenous.

¹¹"The Pattern of Christian Work in India," The South India Churchman (December, 1953), pp. 2 f.

¹²"C.S.I. Council in G.B.," The South India Churchman (March, 1953), p. 4.

A Revitalized Evangelical Mission Program

Ever since its formation in 1947 the leaders of the Church of South India have been emphasizing the basic need for evangelism on the part of the new church. This emphasis has brought about a great missionary zeal in the Church of South India and has led to the inauguration of "foreign missions." The Church of South India has almost a score of missions in operation which it maintains at an annual cost of Rs. 128,000 (about \$25,600) without any foreign aid. The Church of South India carries on so-called foreign missions among the aboriginal Gonds in Central India and among the natives of the island of Papua.¹³

The Church of South India and the Papua District Committee of the L.M.S. have a working agreement in Papua whereby the Papua District Committee advises the Church of South India whenever there are openings for Church of South India workers or missionaries. The only real difficulty in this matter is that the Church of South India missionaries often do not have adequate training, but many of them are proving to be successful workers.¹⁴

This raises the question whether the native churches or

¹³E. Priestly, "A United Church Evangelizes," The National Christian Council Review, LXXII (September, 1952), 379 ff.

¹⁴"Papua," The South India Churchman (July, 1953), p. 5.

the mission societies should carry on mission work. The situation is nicely summed up by one of the bishops in the Church of South India in this manner:

. . . . The eighteenth century knew Churches which had totally ceased to be missionary societies and saw the birth of missionary societies which made no claim to be Churches As was to be expected, the missionary societies often brought with them an inadequate doctrine of the Church. The main emphasis in all the thinking of the younger churches to-day is towards the remedying of this defect. The words "devolution," "integration" and the like remind us of the struggles which the younger Churches are having to reassert the truth that it is the Church which is the mission because it has the commission to represent Christ to men.¹⁵

It must be noted that the union movement in south India was primarily Indian. This development shows that some of the Indian Christian leaders were viewing their church as a missionary agency rather than an organization.¹⁶

Reconstruction of Liturgy

Considerable difficulty has been encountered in forming a uniform liturgy. One of the early attempts is especially noteworthy. A proposed form of service closely following Hindu pagan rites was conducted at the Bishop's Theological College at Tirumariyur and later reproduced at the Centenary Hall with the urging of Bishop Selwyn. The form of the

¹⁵ J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, The Reunion of the Church (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 10.

¹⁶ A. J. Arangaden, Church Union in South India (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1947), p. 15.

service is roughly as follows: no clerical vestments, instead, all wear native Indian costumes; all worshippers wash their feet at the door of the chapel (a Hindu custom); the worshippers go in procession around the chapel singing Tamil lyrics (a Hindu custom); then the confession is sung as a lyric to the accompaniment of Indian musical instruments. The sermon was based on an important idea in the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta.¹⁷ This particular form of service was by no means common, but it does illustrate the extremes possible in a church which is not uniform in its practice.

Something has been done to produce a more uniform order of service for the congregations in the Church of South India. A liturgy committee was set up in 1948 and worked out a liturgy based on some elements of all the union churches. This order of service was first used at the synod in 1950. A final form of the order of service should be adopted at the synod of 1954 after the difficulties have been eliminated during this trial period.

A completely new lectionary is being drawn up to include the readings for daily services. Some areas even prescribe sermon texts which must be used.

In addition to the combined order of service there is the order of communion. Besides these combined orders there will also have to be specific rites according to the Anglican

¹⁷A. J. Appasamy, "An Indian Form of Worship," The National Christian Council Review, LXVIII (January, 1948), 23 f.

and Reformed traditions. An order for confirmation has been selected with the view of gaining the approval of the Church of England. The Methodist Church of Australia has proposed to take on this order of confirmation. Till now there has been no work on a uniform baptismal service.¹⁸

¹⁸L. W. Brown, "Five Years of Liturgical Progress," The South India Churchman (September, 1952), pp. 16 f.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

The Church of South India considers itself to be in the process of union. The inauguration of the union in 1947 has always been regarded as only the beginning rather than the complete consummation of this union. The proposal incorporated in the negotiations for union stated that actual union was not contemplated till thirty years after the union had been inaugurated. For this reason it is difficult to give a true evaluation of this union at this early date since the union has been in operation for only six years.

A Critical Evaluation from England, America, and India

One of the distinguishing marks of the union was the large amount of criticism which it received. This criticism continued after the union, but at a lesser pace. The real value of this criticism is that it gives somewhat of an evaluation of the union itself. The presentation of a sample criticism from outside the union will help toward a proper evaluation. A Scottish Episcopal minister had this to say about the Church of South India in 1950:

The Church of South India has now close on a million adherents. But in spite of our fondest hopes, the union has not yet resulted in any reduction in the number of divisions in the body of Christ in South India or in the world. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, are all reported to have stayed out in

different places, and the new Church of South India is not yet in full communion with Anglicans anywhere.

. . . But it sometimes seems almost as if we were moving towards the formation of a Protestant bloc, vis-à-vis the Roman Church in particular If we are in fact aiming at the establishment of a Protestant bloc, then it is hypocrisy to claim that we are striving for the fulfillment of the Lord's will.¹

This is rather sharp criticism coming from a quarter which had actually gained much in the union that adopted the historic episcopate. A much more deliberate and thoughtful criticism can be gained from a rather lengthy excerpt found in a Lutheran paper published in America. This Lutheran writer sets forth this opinion:

Although the union is not of such a nature as to commend itself to one with the Lutheran conception of the nature of the Church it is, on the whole, a step in the right direction. The united Church has adopted a minimum credal statement which includes the authority of the Word of God, the atoning work of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation by faith. It confesses clearly the essential doctrines of the holy catholic faith. It does not make a detailed confession of faith on all important doctrines because it feels that the uniting churches must "grow together" in the faith. On this principle no uniting church was expected to surrender or alter any of its beliefs before union. Much emphasis has been placed on the "contribution" which each of the uniting churches has made to the whole, an emphasis which has given rise to the fear among some Lutherans that the new Church by "standing for everything" will in the end "fall for anything."

Our judgment on this new venture in Protestant unity should be tempered by the knowledge that it has been brought about by the efforts of men who humbly and sincerely believe that they are acting in obedience to the will of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To overlook this fact, or to minimize it in any way, would discolor our whole view of the Church of South India.

¹C. M. Copland, "On From South India," The National Christian Council Review, LXX (March, 1950), 115 f.

Although there is, in our view, an incomplete understanding of the nature of the Church's catholicity and a resulting overemphasis on the outward form of the Church, there has been and is, an earnest desire to manifest in a greater measure than heretofore the existing unity among believers If we Lutherans, in our lawful anxiety to preserve the true nature of the Church's catholicity, have at times tended to minimize the importance of the outward manifestation of that unity we can find an exemplary corrective in the zeal and consecration with which these men have pursued their goal of "One Church."²

Since the writer of the above remarks is connected with this writer's denomination, his remarks can in part be taken to express my own opinion. However, for a more complete evaluation of the criticism leveled against the Church of South India we must also consider the criticism coming from within that church. There could easily be much quoting of the radicals, but a good concise evaluation is given in an editorial of the official paper of the Church of South India. The editor states his position with these words:

No wonder that - not taking into account the Bishops and Conference habitues - there is more enthusiasm for the C.S.I. among Missionaries (some of whom jealously regard it as their handiwork) than among other indigenous clergy, who hardly feel that they have a stake in the Church, or among the laity who were not adequately prepared for the coming Union and have, therefore, largely reconciled themselves to it as inevitable. The truth is that there is little love or enthusiasm for the C.S.I. among the rank and file.³

²M. L. Kretzman, "The Future of the Lutheran Church in the Orient," American Lutheran, XXXIII (January, 1950), 7 and 18.

³"The Challenge of C.S.I.," The South India Churchman (September, 1952), p. 3.

With the material in this paper as background I shall attempt to give my own evaluation of the Church of South India, particularly in two fields. The first area will be the basic unifying factor and its value as a basis for union, and the second will be the advantages and disadvantages of church union in a so-called mission area.

The Basic Unifying Factor

The basic unifying factor in the Church of South India is the doctrine of the Church. This doctrine has been oversimplified and is based almost entirely on John 17 and Ephesians 4. This oversimplification has led to the development of the outward form of the Church while seriously neglecting the inner unity of faith which constitutes the Church. Certainly both outward union and inner unity were taken into consideration, but outward union was considered the primary factor and inward unity as secondary. Many other attempts at union have stressed the inward unity first and the outward union second. The true basis of union lies in achieving some degree of balance between these two factors.

By putting this emphasis on the doctrine of the Church, the Church of South India chose wisely. The fact of the matter is that any scheme of union must always be considered in terms of Church union and not denominational union. The one large fault found in the position of the Church of South India is that it did not sufficiently define this doctrine

of the Church to satisfy those groups which it hoped to take into fellowship with itself. However, at the same time the Church of South India must be commended for its attempt at simplicity in stating its doctrine which reduced the wrangling over words to a minimum.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Union in a Mission Area

The advantages of church union in a so-called mission area are generally the same as they would be in any other area. However, in the mission area the Church must be extremely careful not to expose itself to undue ridicule from the heathen. This ridicule finds a fertile field in the various divisions that have been produced by denominationalism. A true union of the Church would make it possible to have a union of effort and means, and would make for better stewardship of men and funds sent to the mission area. Another advantage would be that the mission area could be covered more effectively by a central plan and strategy. Above all, a united Church would be in a better position to establish indigenous churches since it would eliminate the danger of secession and transfer of leaders from one denomination to the other. However, in the final analysis these advantages depend entirely on a union in faith and doctrine as well as in outward form.

The disadvantages of church union as it is exemplified in the Church of South India can be divided into two major

categories. One disadvantage is a drastic reduction in the doctrinal platform of the Church. By attempting to integrate the doctrine and practice of many denominations it has in the process adopted error as well as truth. This still leaves the new church with the problem of trying to weed out the errors without disrupting the outward form. The other disadvantage of church union in a mission area is the complication that develops in producing an indigenous church. The Church of South India is still receiving financial assistance from its parent organizations. As long as this situation continues, the Church of South India will be bound to these parent organizations because they show no intention of contributing funds without at the same time contributing claims and demands on the new church. If this support is withdrawn, the Church of South India is in danger of disintegrating because of its acute poverty. On the other hand, so long as this support exists the Church of South India will not be able to establish itself as a truly indigenous church.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from the union which brought about the Church of South India. The men who worked for its formation did not all see it come into being. However, in the process they exhibited a faith that would not be daunted by the most difficult obstacles that are connected with efforts of this kind. They have given a valuable example to all those who think that all effort at union is useless. Their overemphasis on the outward aspects of church

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